



Airside Safety Week begins at Aruba's Reina Beatrix Airport

The ever present need for conscientious safety and security controls surrounding air traffic is ever present in the minds of the people behind the scenes of the world's airports. People that traveler's never meet work diligently to insure that they arrive at their destination safely, and the staff of Aruba's Reina Beatrix Airport have earned a #1 rating by the FAA in that regard. Airport officials agree that to maintain those high standards constant training and reminders to their ground and airside is essential, it is an ongoing, never-ending process requiring continuing education.

To that end, the Airport Reina Beatrix Safety Commission initiated an Airside Safety Week beginning on Monday, March 20 for all their key employees. Five full days spent reviewing procedures and possible points for error based on incidents from airports around the world will inform and enlighten all the airside employees and make them aware of possible trouble points. Common sense tells us that what it comes to air traffic, the prevention of any error, no matter how small, is essential, as the possible consequences are tragic. This applies not only to the prevention of incidences regarding flights, but also to the workers around the airport as well.

In his address to the gathering, airport director Peter Steinmetz cited an incident in December of last year that caused the return of an Alaskan Airlines Boeing MD-83 after take-off. Investigation revealed that the plane had sustained damage resulting in a small hole in the skin just before its departure from Seattle Tacoma for Burbank California, and the pressure stresses at thousands of feet of elevation caused the hole to enlarge and a reduction in air cabin pressure. Twenty minutes after take-off the pilots returned to the airport, for the plane to be checked out and the passengers transported in a new one. It was established that ground equipment had made contact with the plane and the employee did not report it at the time claiming they were unaware there was any damage. Incidents like this not only present a real danger; they cost the airlines billions of dollars annually, a cost that will eventually be passed on to the consumer.

"The Aruba Airport Authority lately has put a lot of emphasis on ramp safety," Peter Steinmetz told the gathering. "...we have instituted the Airside Safety Management Unit and we work very closely with all ramp users in our Airside Safety Council. We are constantly working on education and training for the ramp employees. We control ramp equipment on compliance with the safety requirements; we improve operational procedures and we invest in new facilities."

In addition, the AAA with the cooperation of American Airlines and Aeropostal conducted a campaign amongst airport employees for creating a new safety slogan, and the design of a safety logo and mascot. On Monday morning, Inneke Lampe, Country Manager of American Airlines awarded Gregory Falconi of the Business Unite Security a round trip ticket to Miami for his slogan "On Safe Airport" and accompanying logo design. Mauricio Boekhoedt awarded Gino Kock of Security a ticket on Aeropostal for his bright blue mascot that always wears its safety equipment.

After the awards the week of lectures began in earnest with a presentation by Airside Safety Manager Eric Martijn and will continue through the week touching on a wide variety of topics and concerns for airside workers. A long list of guest speakers covering topics from technical and equipment handling issues to the Human Factor and how physical and emotional state can also affect job performance and safety.

Despite their high rating with the FAA, the management and staff of the Aruba International Reina Beatrix Airport realize that maintaining an impeccable safety record is not only an achievement, it is a requirement. This week is part of the continuing effort to insure the safety of not only every passenger that passes through, but every employee that works there every day.